



The Director-General



Secretary General

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP - Kazakhstan

1. Context for EU action gender equality and women's empowerment in the country

Kazakhstan has made some notable progress in protecting the rights and legitimate interests of men and women since its independence in December 1991. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, women and men have equal rights in all spheres of life. A legislative framework has been created for the implementation of gender equality through the adoption of the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women" and "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence", both adopted at the end of 2009.

Gender equality have gradually gained importance in Kazakhstan in various documents of national and regional significance. Since 1998 an authorized body in the field of gender policy the National Commission for Women Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been functioning.

Over the past two decades the Republic of Kazakhstan has signed a number of international agreements, adopted numerous laws and developed government measures that have become key conditions for increasing women's participation in government activities. Based on compliance with international treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, Kazakhstan has developed its Gender Equality Strategy for 2006-2016, which for the last ten years has served as the main reference point for state activities in the gender domain¹.

Kazakhstan is one of the few countries in the world that has established a regulatory framework detailing the strategic steps of the state to develop gender equality. As of today it consists of the "Concept of Family and Gender Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030" which is implemented through the use of a phased planning mechanism. Kazakhstan approached this document through the adoption and implementation of logically linked documents of national importance:

¹ Implementation of gender policy in Kazakhstan. OECD
2017. http://www.oecd.org/gov/Russian_Gender_Kaz.pdf

Kazakhstan is progressing towards gender equality according to the international indicators used for measuring the progress and comparing results across the UN member states. According to UNDP's latest Human Development Report 2021-22, Kazakhstan moved up 3 positions and ranked 41st out of 167 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (0.161)². This index assesses the degree of gender inequality in three dimensions: (i) reproductive health, (ii) impact and economic opportunities, and (iii) women's participation in the labor market. Further analysis of these measurements suggests low female mortality and fertility rates among adolescent girls; parity of the number of boys and girls in primary and secondary education; and a high proportion of women in the labor force. The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), devised by the World Economic Forum, another cross-country comparison of gender equality, which assesses the following key categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Kazakhstan moved up 15 positions due to successful reforms in the field of gender development and ranked 65 out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index Rank in 2022³.

However, the issue of gender based violence remains a significant public health and human rights concern in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. Understanding prevalence remains a challenge, the current level of prevalence is 16.5 %⁴. Domestic violence is not yet criminalised in the country, however discussions are ongoing. Maintaining the reproductive health of adolescents also remains to be a serious problem in Kazakhstan.

One of the most important gender problems in the labour market in Kazakhstan is the high level of vertical segregation. Over the years of reforms in Kazakhstan, a new form of employment is rapidly growing - self-employment, which is often used by the population when implementing a survival strategy. It should be noted that in Kazakhstan, as in the entire space of the CIS countries, self-employment is often associated with work in the informal sector of the economy, and, consequently, with frequent violation of labor legislation, weak social protection.

Kazakhstan is an active member of the UN and has all the necessary prerequisites for the successful implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 on women, peace and security. The most important component is the existence of a clearly formulated and consistently implemented policy and efforts to prevent conflicts and maintain peace in the region. It is important to increase participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts of the country. The country is an active member of such regional organizations as the OSCE, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. Kazakhstan is a donor country of the UN Trust Funds for Gender Equality and the Elimination of Violence against Women, where activities such as the solution of the problems and needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations is a priority.

Achieving gender equality and creating conditions for the development of women is an important factor in human development. Gender inequality slows down the socio-political development of the country, civil society institutions, and local self-government. Ineffective use of the potential of the female half of the country's population, which has no equal opportunities with men in implementing their life plans and tasks, leads to the persistence of tension at the level of interpersonal communication, institutional relations and, in general, between citizens and the state. Inequality between women and men is also disadvantageous to

² <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

³ <https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/gender-equality>

⁴ <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/kazakhstan#5>

the state and society in economic terms, since it inhibits the development of human capital, makes projects for economic development, poverty eradication, and unemployment reduction ineffective.

Within process of developing the Gender Profile, official statistics and the results of recent research studies in the field of gender equality in Kazakhstan were used, which made it possible to identify relevant directions for further activities in the field of promoting equal rights and opportunities. The commitments undertaken by Kazakhstan on the implementation of the main international documents in the field of gender equality were also taken into account. The gender profile was discussed with international organizations and donors working in Kazakhstan and paying attention to the promotion of gender equality in various areas of human development. The Gender Profile, which is the basis of CLIP, was also discussed with representatives of the National Commission for Women and Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan; civil society (non-governmental organisations working in the field of protecting the economic and social rights of women and children; the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan); National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken".

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

Kazakhstan is an Upper Middle-Income country, therefore had no EU bilateral cooperation programme until recently. The new Cooperation Facility (2021-2027) supports the implementation of the EU-Kazakhstan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) through a Team Europe approach. A financing agreement of 9 Mill EUR implementing the first part of the Cooperation Facility was signed in May 2023. The cooperation facility focuses on the implementation of the EU-Kazakh Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in particular in two priority areas: *Sustainable Economic Growth* and *Rule of Law*

The objective of the first area is to promote a more diverse, green and circular economy, through investments and support to a greener, more digital and more inclusive private sector. The Cooperation Facility will focus on enhanced cooperation in sectors such as trade and green transition. It will offer opportunities to promote EU policies and interests in these sectors, including with regard to climate action, improve the business climate, enhance investments from Europe, diversify the economy and ease access to finance and markets for the local and European private sector. The Facility will contribute to developing Euro-Asian *connectivity* and creating decent jobs, in line with the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the UN "Guiding principles on Business and Human rights", as a way to participate in an equitable post-pandemic economic recovery. For all activities promoting economic growth, compliance with the rights-based approach will be closely monitored, notably to ensure the participation of rights-holders and affected communities in line with our commitment to inclusive growth and "leave no-one behind". It will support Kazakhstan in achieving its climate goals and improve the environmental situation. Thus, the Facility will contribute to the implementation of the EU Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan and of the Gender Action Plan III.

The objective of the second area, *Rule of Law*, is to support the strengthening of the legal framework and institutions in place to ensure the respect of human rights, including labour rights, and justice for all, in line with the Venice Commission standards. In this area the Facility will be used to support targeted efforts in fighting corruption, inequality, including gender inequality, and the development of a more business and investment friendly legal environment, e.g. through e-governance and digitization. Targeted assistance and policy dialogue to support the establishment of an independent, effective and accountable judicial system, as well as compliance with fair trial standards will be key. The facility should also support efforts in decentralisation and strengthening the administrative governance.

As a means to ensuring an effective and systematic engagement of CSOs, the Roadmap on the EU's Engagement with CSOs will be kept up to date and its implementation monitored, e.g. through an annual survey. Cooperation with CSOs will be increased both at national and regional level.

The political dialogue will be addressed through the Cooperation Facility, while the gender mainstreaming will be addressed through the regional programmes as well as the thematic EIDHR and CSO-LA programmes.

The overall objective for the women empowerment and gender equality of the EU in Kazakhstan is to strengthen the partnership on gender equality through improved policy dialogues, capacity development and outreach on the GAP III with the Government of Kazakhstan, the civil society, the private sector and other key stakeholders. This will be undertaken together with EU Member States.

Based on the results of the analysis within the Gender Profile, four areas were selected for the further advancement of gender equality in Kazakhstan.

The selected areas of engagement are:

- 1) Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence;
- 2) Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- 3) Promoting economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women;
- 4) Integrating the women, peace and security agenda.

1) Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence:

- Creation of first Central Asia-wide mechanism ("the Alliance");
- Develop region specific Models and Tools guiding state-led prevention of and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and harmful practices, as well as regional efforts to close the data gap on SGBV;
- Build broad alliances across the 5 countries and Afghanistan to tackle the root causes of SGBV and harmful practices,
- Leverage political will to increase the effectiveness and inclusiveness of response to cases of SGBV and to ultimately prevent SGBV;
- Strengthen Gender Based Violence prevention and response with a whole of society approach;
- Share best practices and support the strengthened knowledge and skills of partners to develop and implement innovative and effective actions to eventually end SGBV.

2) Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights:

- Improve access for every individual to health care and services, information and education on sexual and reproductive rights will take place in the context of the large post-Covid vaccination project implemented by WHO;
- Facilitate human and civil rights literacy among adolescent girls with a particular focus on protection from violence against individuals through the development of educational programmes and methodological materials to clarify the status of marriage and family;
- Develop parental education programmes on sexual and reproductive rights and health;
- Provide support to national communities in overcoming customs, harmful for the development and health of girls, through awareness raising activities taking into

account the characteristics of the culture and traditions of ethnic groups, especially those in rural areas and in engaging religious organisations to protect the girls' rights.

3) Promoting economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women:

- Increase access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women's transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems;
- Improve policy, legal framework and access to care services enabling equal division of domestic and care work between women and men;
- Improve access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy for women in all their diversity;
- Increase access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources;
- Improve access for women in all their diversity to managerial and leadership roles in social and economic sectors and for a;
- support the development of training programs for small business skills followed by introduction of such programs in high school and at all levels of vocational education and training.

4) Integrating the women, peace and security agenda.

- Increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts;
- Support the development of the National Action Plan on implementation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1325 resolution with a focus on disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change processes.

The EU will continue undertaking Policy Dialogue with Kazakhstan in close cooperation with EU Member States.

The EU will continue its support to further strengthen the capacity of civil society. CSOs will continue to play an important role as partners for the Government and the EU through their monitoring of and support for the implementation of Kazakhstan's international and constitutional commitments. As a means to ensuring an effective and systematic engagement of CSOs, the Roadmap on the EU's Engagement with CSOs will be kept up to date and its implementation monitored, e.g. through an annual survey.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

As Kazakhstan does not benefit from any dedicated to gender aspect bilateral envelope, support to gender equality will be provided through the country specific calls for proposals under the EIDHR and CSO-LA. Currently projects are focusing on enhancing legal protection of migrants rights, empowering human rights based dialogue, promoting the elimination of torture and developing democratic foundations of modern policing in the country. Gender will be a priority area in the thematic national calls from 2021-2025.

Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence, the first priority area for advancement of gender equality in Kazakhstan, has been addressed by the **EU-UN Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme in Central Asia and Afghanistan 2021-2023** (hereafter

Spotlight Initiative), tailored to address specific legislative and policy gaps, strengthen institutions and promote gender-equitable attitudes, provide quality services for survivors and empower women's movements, leaving no one behind. It is the most comprehensive global policy frameworks for the rights of women with innovative approaches and modalities.

Spotlight Initiative, a programme of over EUR 4 Million, implemented by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA between January 2021 and December 2023, focused at 5 distinct pillars, namely: (i) supporting legal and policy reforms, (ii) fortifying institutions, (iii) challenging prevailing social norms, (iv) bridging data gaps, and (vi) promoting civil society and women's movements. It achieved significant results:

- 1 unified methodology to review national SGBV legislation and law-enforcement practices for their compliance with international norms and standards;
- 5 analytical reviews of national SGBV legislation and 5 country reports with recommendations on architecture of response to GBV.
- A Roadmap and Monitoring and Evaluation Tool developed to ensure the effective implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at the country level. These tools will enhance care and support for SGBV survivors and improve sectoral practices.
- Creation of Central Asia Alliance on ending GBV.
- Over 12 million individuals joined the HeForShe Central Asia Campaign
- 50+ HeForShe Advocates from academia, business, media joined the solidarity movement for gender equality in CA
- Over 500 civil society actor formed CSOs regional network.
- 3000 representatives of CSOs trained by pool of 21 regional trainers, etc.

A regional Central Asian Alliance on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence was launched in June 2023 as a vehicle to exchange best practices in fighting Gender based violence in order to ensure the sustainability of the Spotlight Initiative and carry on the work that has started during the programme.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

The main interlocutor for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Kazakhstan is the National Commission for Women Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This governmental authority has been consulted during the development of the Gender Profile and the CLIP, among the other stakeholders, including CSOs.

A new Kazakhstan Roadmap for engagement with civil society for the period of 2021-2025 has been developed. The EU strategic engagement with civil society will continue to improve the CSOs access to EU policies and programmes, to strengthen capacities of CSOs especially working in the areas of EU priorities, support national consultation mechanisms, encourage their contribution to EU policies, including as regards inequalities, youth engagement, gender equality, green deal and others. Gender equality is a key cross-cutting element for the Roadmap's priorities.

During Human Rights consultations between the EU Delegation, EU Member States and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 22 November 2023, the representative from the Ministry of Information and Culture and Ministry of Interior provided detailed updates on the situation with gender equality and domestic violence in the country. The Gender Policy Coordination Office of the Ministry of Culture and Information informed about the updated

Concept of Family and Gender Policy until 2030 that now includes plans to increase to 30% the share of women at decision-making levels in executive, representative and judicial authorities, state, quasi-state, and corporate sectors. The same policy set steps to decrease domestic violence against women, improve the gender wage gap, and increase women's ownership of assets.

Kazakhstan has ratified several international conventions, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1999). She also provided statistics about numbers of women being in the parliament and government. In September 2021, Kazakhstan's Parliament adopted a law on the abolition of the list of jobs restricted to women and informed about "Tomiris" project aimed at promoting women's leadership.

Taking into account the recent cases of domestic violence, the Mazhilis of the Parliament, as of November 2023, is considering new amendments, that if approved, would criminalize domestic violence in Kazakhstan (these intentions were also confirmed by the representative of Presidential Administration).

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

Since 2019 the EU Delegation is engaged in the annual EU-Central Asia Civil Society Forum (CSF) - a platform for dialogue involving representatives of civil society from Central Asia and the European Union, in the discussion of implementation of the EU Strategy in Central Asia. At the last Forum in Tashkent in March 2023, the discussions focused on better utilisation of the potential and expertise of the civil society, increase understanding of the EU objectives and values, strengthening EU's visibility, and enhancing dialogue among the government, civil society and private sector in key sectors such as green transition or vocational education.

Gender equality and women and girls' empowerment issues are in the agenda of the annual policy dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan. EU Delegation to Kazakhstan will be organising public diplomacy activities.

6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

While no specific amount has been earmarked in the Cooperation Facility for Kazakhstan to support the implementation of GAP III, gender equality will be mainstreamed in the new actions and ongoing political dialogues. More specifically gender equality will also be addressed in future CSO and EIDHR projects.

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Signature by Head of Delegation:



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